

[1961-June 29]

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON GROUP RELATIONS

JUNE 29, 1961

Commissioners present:

Chairman Alexander Mark
Vice Chairman Leonard Holman
William Ashby
Jordan Davis

John Cahill
John Marks
Dr. M. Rago
Lewis Pitts

Angel Torres

Staff Present:

Geniel S. Anthony

Charles Hayes

The final meeting of the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations before the summer recess, was called to order at 8:25 P.M. by Commission Chairman Alexander Mark on Thursday, June 29, 1961.

At this meeting members of the Clergy Advisory Council also attended: Those clergymen present were Reverends Blake, Carey, Heimbald, McGregor, Leach, Milgrom, Meserer, Rabbi Turner and Rabbi Kline.

The first order of business was the lodging of two formal complaints by Puerto Rican residents of Newark. The first complaint was made by Mr. Joseph Rivera of Columbus Homes, 64 7th Ave., Newark. He spoke through an interpreter and described how he was harassed, annoyed, abused and beaten by a Newark policeman described by Mr. Rivera as Rocky, Badge 273. Mr. Rivera was arrested and brought before Judge Castellano in Municipal Court. He was denied an interpreter and was sentenced but paroled because he had no previous record. He stated that he did not receive full due process of law.

A Mr. Lopes, friend of Rivera, also testified in behalf of Mr. Rivera, telling of the abuses in Columbus Homes against Puerto Ricans. Mr. Rivera stated that while he was being beaten, Mr. Pat Vitola, the Housing Project manager, was present and did nothing to stop the incident. Mr. Rivera also mentioned a Housing Authority policeman, Project patrolman Venessia, who harasses and annoys the Puerto Rican residents.

Commissioner John Cahill moved: "That the Commission investigate the Housing Manager Pat Vitola, the policeman - Badge 273 and the Housing Guard; and request the Housing Authority and Police Department to do likewise". The motion was put on the floor by Commissioner Torres, moved and seconded by Comm. Holman. The vote on this motion was unanimous.

The second complaint was filed by a Mrs. Gladys Irisarry, a social case worker at Martland Medical Center. Mrs. Irisarry stated that she tried to rent an apartment at 766 Broadway, Newark. As she was about to give a deposit on the apartment, she was asked if she was Puerto Rican. She replied, "Yes", and the Supt. told her that Puerto Ricans were not wanted.

Dan Anthony, Executive Director, explained to the complainant that the City does not have a Fair Practices Housing Ordinance. As of today, a State Law is pending in the Legislature on this aspect of Housing but has not been passed. Therefore, we are legally handicapped in this situation and can only attempt an appeal to the owner's democratic attitudes.

Father Heinbold suggested that we write a letter to the apartment house owner on Commission stationery, strongly worded to exert moral pressure on the owner. Rabbi Turner suggested that we also try to get in touch with the owner's clergyman and exert moral pressure that way as well.

1. Charles Hayes, field worker with the Commission, described the scholarships to the Rutgers Workshops. "In 1951, our Executive Director, Daniel Anthony, in cooperating with several other N. J. citizens, began a program to educate responsible community leaders in human relations, and for leadership in the human relations field. The program was sponsored by the N.C.C.J. and Division on Civil Rights, and held on the Rutgers U. Campus in New Brunswick, N. J. Each year, the Commission on Group Relations offers several full scholarships to residents of Newark who are community leaders or active in community work. This year the Commission awarded 8 of these scholarships and a special \$100 scholarship to William Erwin, a Newark high school guidance counselor, for a 3 week Workshop for Teachers at Rutgers University.

This is a unique program. There is nothing exactly like it in the country. I am asking all Commissioners and members of the Clergy Advisory Council to look around their neighborhoods and congregations for persons who might benefit from these highly worthwhile experiences."

Rabbi Turner suggested that we notify each member of the clergy in ample time for them to announce the availability of these scholarships from their pulpits.

2. The next order of business was an item of information on the Lower Clinton Hill Light Industrial Park controversy by Dan Anthony. On Monday, June 26th, a bus ride was sponsored by the Greater Newark Economic Development Committee to Fairlawn, N. J., to view an ideal industrial park in that area. Those present on the ride were members of the Urban League, the Commission on Group Relations and Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council.

This area covers 191 acres and included 19 industries. The proposed Clinton Hill area covers 249 acres. At this point, Mr. Anthony called on Rev. Claude Kilgore who spoke about the human element of urban renewal. Rev. Kilgore felt that industries could be located in a more advantageous place than the center of the City. He felt that the outskirts were ideal and that the problem of relocation is a major one because people do not like public housing and know that they cannot get adequate private housing in a city which does not have adequate open occupancy laws.

Commissioner Louis Pitte reiterated this idea and spoke from a personal point of view because of his residency in the area. He stated that these people are tired of moving and do not want the homes they have worked so hard for destroyed. Some of the area must be cleared but not the homes indiscriminately. Commissioner Holman stated that middle-income housing will be constructed near the Prudential Apartments at \$30 a room for those people relocated from the light industrial area.

3. Chairman Alexander Mark informed the Commission and Clergymen present of the Board of Education meeting on Thursday, June 29th at 2 P.M. This meeting was conducted with the administrative staff of the Board of Education. Our purpose was to inform the Board of the many pressures that are being leveled on the Mayor's Commission to alleviate some of these alleged abuses in the Newark School System. The Board seemed reluctant to acknowledge the presence of these abuses; and stated they were blown out of proportion by certain self-centered pressure groups. They were not too happy over the Commission attempt to inform them of the actions taken by New York City School System's Commission on Integration.

4. Charles Hayes reported the meetings of sub-committees of the Clergy Advisory Council. In an effort to get our Clergy Advisory Council's immediate aid in areas which the Commission feels it needs this assistance, we held several sub-committee meetings with the Clergy during the week of June 12th. These were held on Thursday at 10 A.M. and 2 P.M., and on Friday, at 2 P.M. The three sub-committees that met were: (1) Neighborhood relations, (2) Church-centered social action and (3) Education.

These were not formal meetings but merely discussion sessions in which the staff explored with the Clergymen present just what the feelings of their community were as regards race relations, community cooperation and community spirit.

The Clergy Advisory Council suggested the following:

A. Interracial profiles of neighborhoods in Newark should be drawn in an effort to head off potential tensions and create greater communal harmony.

B. Fields and problems to which we could address ourselves must be less ambiguous and must be attacked positively.

C. An adequate program must be planned to answer the City's youth problems.

Rabbi Turner suggested we print a pamphlet on summer fun for youth in Newark.

5. On July 12th at 8 P.M. in Washington Park, an open public meeting sponsored by the Committee for Freedom Riders will take place. James Farmer, national director of CORE will be guest speaker.

6. Mr. Anthony spoke of the Fair Housing Practices Ordinance of Newark which is now being drawn up by the American Jewish Congress. Alterations may be made when the Commission meets again in September.

Chairman Mark suggested that we notify those organizations which have come to the Commission with complaints about housing and suggestions for a Fair Housing Practices Ordinance, and tell them of the progress in this matter.

The Commission was notified of the death of Monsignor Cornelius Boyle by Father Thomas Carey of Our Lady Queen of Angels Church. It was suggested that a note of condolence be sent to the Archbishop of Newark.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles J. Hayes
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